Prevention of Heat Injuries

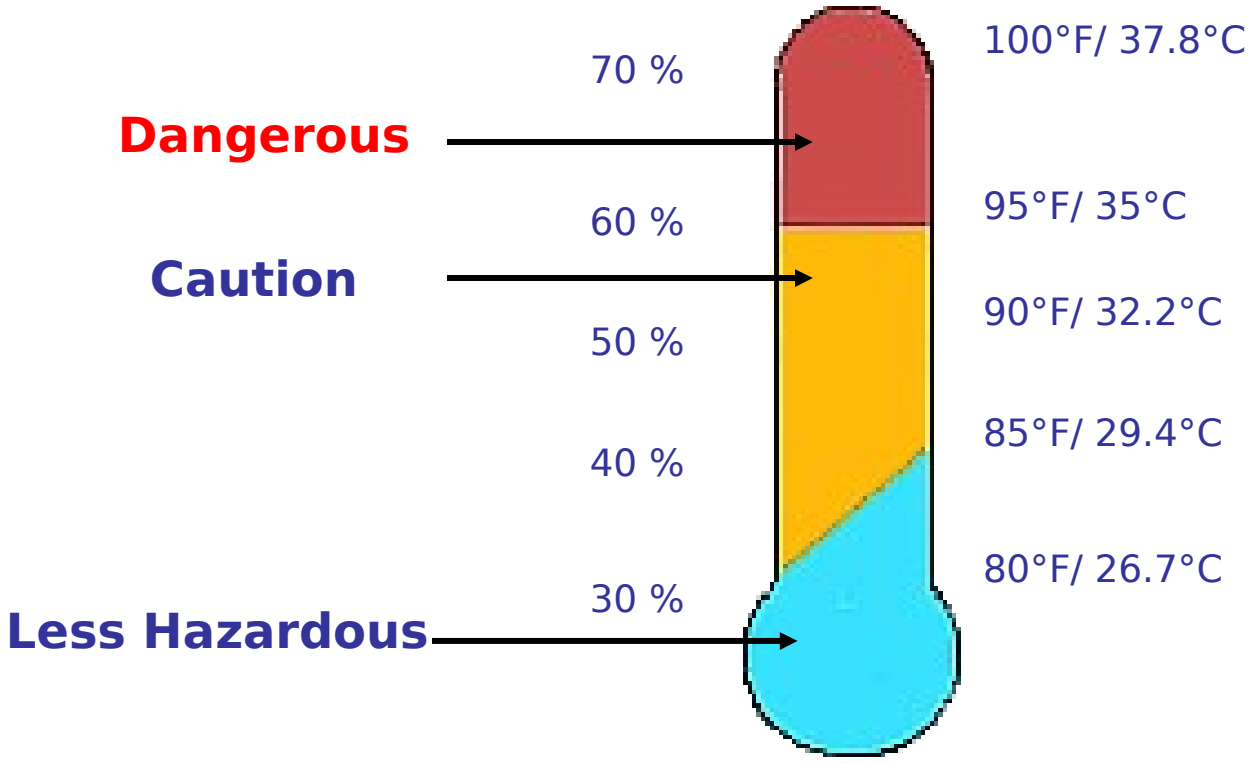
How to cope with heat stress

It is that time of year again when we have to worry about the heat and its affects. Working under hot and humid conditions places a lot of stress on the body, which can result in minor or life threatening illnesses.

There are a number of heat-related injuries, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion and sunstroke. Learning the difference between them is not as important as recognizing signs and taking action

While working or exercising in conditions of high temperature and low relative humidity can put a lot of stress on the body, the addition of high humidity can be dangerous.

Heat Index



“Heat Index” is the opposite of "wind chill". The Heat Index combines the effects of heat and humidity. Warm temperatures feel even warmer when it is humid.

HEAT INDEX VALUES AND THEIR EFFECTS…ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK:

*** 80 to 90 degrees - Fatigue possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.**

*** 90 to 105 degrees - Sunstroke, heat cramps, and heat exhaustion possible with prolonged exposure and or physical activity.**

*** 105 to 130 degrees - Sunstroke, heat cramps or heat exhaustion likely, and heatstroke possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.**

*** 130 degrees and higher - Heatstroke/sunstroke highly likely with continued exposure.**

Recognize and Act

A person suffering cramps, who might be sweating profusely, has a headache or has fainted should be moved to a cool or shaded place, sponged with a damp cloth and given cool water. Monitor their condition.

A heat casualty who is not treated can quickly succumb to heat stroke, which is a life-threatening condition. The skin can be hot and dry and the person may be convulsing. Seek immediate medical aid and cool them on the way to the hospital.

HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES AND THEIR SYMPTOMS

* SUNBURN - Redness and pain in the skin. In severe cases there is also swelling, blisters, fever, and headaches.

* HEAT CRAMPS - Heavy sweating and painful spasms usually in the leg or abdomen muscles.

* HEAT EXHAUSTION - The person becomes weak and is sweating heavily. The skin is cold, pale and clammy. The pulse becomes thready. Fainting and vomiting accompanies heat exhaustion. Seek medical assistance.

* HEATSTROKE/SUNSTROKE - High body temperature (106 degrees or higher) along with hot dry skin and a rapid and strong pulse. Unconsciousness is possible. Seek immediate medical assistance.

Avoid Sunburn

Cover as much of your skin as possible with loose-fitting, light-colored, lightweight fabric clothing

Apply a good sunscreen liberally and frequently, especially if susceptible to burning easily

If you get a sunburn, apply an aloe gel.

General Precautions

- ***Hydration***
- **The best way to avoid heat stroke and other heat injuries is to keep your body well hydrated. Drink a lot of water if you are exercising or working in hot conditions. Doctors usually recommend consuming eight or more glasses of water per day. During strenuous exercise, sports drinks replenish electrolytes, but are not a substitute for consuming water.**

- ***Ventilation***
- **Remain in cool areas where your body can cool itself. If working in hot conditions, try to take a break to regain energy and to avoid overexposure to the sun.**

- ***Clothing***
- **What you wear plays a big factor in how your body handles the heat. Light clothing and loose fitting clothing will help your body in breathing and cooling itself. It is fine to wear a hat or cap to protect yourself from the sun but once you feel warm, remove it. This usually traps the heat inside your body.**

- ***Limit yourself***
- **It is also important to watch the amount of activities you are participating in during hot days. Don't overdo it. Heat stroke and other disorders can take affect in less than an hour. If you feel warm or dizzy, it's best to take time to rest.**

- ***Are you fit to work during summer?***
- **Older employees, obese employees, new employees and personnel on medication are at great risk if they decide to work during very hot and humid conditions. It is important to acclimate your body to the environment.**

Hot weather can
bring a host
of hazards.
Protect yourself from the heat!